



## ***CITY OF MIAMI SPRINGS, FLORIDA***

The **Miami Springs Education Advisory Board** met at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday, May 15, 2012 in the City Hall Council Chambers.

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

### **1) Call to Order/Roll Call**

The following were present: Chair Robert J. Gordon  
Vice Chair Dr. John Salomon  
Michael G. Hunter  
Golnaz Sami  
Dr. Mara Zapata

Also Present: City Manager Ronald K. Gorland  
Deputy City Clerk Suzanne Hitafer

### **2) Approval of Minutes: April 17, 2012 Regular Meeting**

Minutes of the April 17, 2012 meeting were approved as written.

**Board member Mara Zapata moved to approve the minutes as written and Vice Chair Salomon seconded the motion, which carried unanimously on voice vote.**

Chair Gordon introduced Mayor Xavier Garcia and Councilman Espino who were in the audience.

Chair Gordon announced that Libby Manning stepped down from the Education Advisory Board after many years of service and Councilman Best has replaced Ms. Manning with Michael G. Hunter. He asked Mr. Hunter to introduce himself to the Board.

Michael Hunter stated that he attended Glenn H. Curtiss Elementary School, Miami Springs Middle School and graduated from Miami Springs Senior High School in 1972. He spent 25 years working in Information Technology (IT), including thirteen years as the IT Director for the Graham Company. After his career in IT, he decided to pursue his passion, which is teaching and he currently teaches physics and mathematics at Doral Charter School. He thanked Councilman Best for giving him the opportunity to serve Miami Springs.

*(Agenda Item 5 was discussed at this time)*

### **3) School Reports:**

Miami Springs Senior High School Principal Anna Rodriguez reported that many students were accepted to college and the vast majority will attend Miami-Dade College, while others will attend the State Universities, the University of Miami, etc. She continued to report the following achievements:

- The City Council recognized the Mu Alpha Theta Math Club for placing tenth in the State competition and Math Teacher Sam Koski received a plaque for thirty years of dedicated excellence.
- The HOSA Club placed 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> for a community awareness projects and qualified to compete at the national level.
- The yearbook was released and it reflects the great things the students are doing.
- There are 125 seats in the I-Tech program next year and Channel 7 reported on the program.
- The school was authorized to offer the prestigious Cambridge Program.

Discussion ensued regarding the I-Tech program that is related to gaming and is very math intensive.

Principal Rodriguez continued reporting that the Prom was held at the Intercontinental Hotel on May 5<sup>th</sup>; the school placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in attendance among County high schools; teacher appreciation week was a great success; Graduation is scheduled for June 7<sup>th</sup> at Florida International University.

Springview Elementary School Principal Dovale reported on the following activities:

- The NED show was a special treat for students and it inspires them to be champions in school and in life.
- Students who met their AR goal for the third nine weeks went on a P.T.A. sponsored field trip to see movie "Mirror Mirror"; 172 K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade students and 179 3-5 grade students participated for a total of 351 students who shared in the event.
- Additional field trips include the Miami Museum of Science, Museum of Discovery, the Children's Museum and a visit to the Barnacle State Park.

- Fifth grade students attended Islands of Adventure for the end of the year trip.
- Health screening is required for 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and took place last week.
- Spirit Week is underway with dress ups and the Book Fair; Reading Under the Stars is on Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>.
- The P.T.A. treated the teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week; the community provided raffle items and gift certificates from local businesses for the teachers.
- Tutoring is finished and the ELL and immigrant students will be going to see the Lion King performance on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Transition for incoming kindergarten was held and they intend to visit the local pre-schools and invite them to visit the school; they are currently conducting individual school tours.
- Grade level transitions are being held on May 29<sup>th</sup> for the teachers to give the students an overview of the expectations for the various grade levels. The students are provided with a supply list and a list of summer reading activities for the new grade level.
- Third graders are participating in additional writing activities.
- The Hialeah-Miami Springs Rotary Club was generous in providing each 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student with a dictionary to help prepare them for 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Assistant Principal Vicky Rodriguez reported on the following activities at Miami Springs Middle School:

- The school painting project is ongoing and should be finished this summer.
- Students are taking end of course exams; 110 students have participated in Algebra, Geometry and Biology exams.
- 200 eighth graders went to Universal and Islands of Adventure; the eighth grade dinner dance is Saturday May 19<sup>th</sup> at the Fire Tower; the eighth grade awards ceremony will be held at Miami Springs Senior High School on June 5<sup>th</sup>.
- The Girl's Basketball team will play in the County championship at the High School.
- The National Honor Society induction ceremony will be held on May 29<sup>th</sup> for approximately 50 new students.
- One sixth grade student was selected as a finalist in the Theodore Gibson Oratorical Competition.
- Two teams will compete in the History and Geography Bees at Miami-Dade College.
- The High School presented information to students on the new Cambridge and I-Tech academies.
- Activities include the school Drama Show, Spring Concert, Band Show and Orchestra Show.
- Magnet students participated in the NBC Weather Day at the Marlins Stadium.
- The gifted program will hold a field day on May 24<sup>th</sup>; Gifted Night will be held on May 29<sup>th</sup>; Literary Night will be held on May 24<sup>th</sup>.

All Angels Academy Teacher Denise Albiza reported the following on behalf of Mother Keedy:

- The school had their National Elementary Honor Society induction ceremony; students were honored at the Independent Schools of South Florida Star Student luncheon.
- Activities include the Earth Day celebration, Book Fair, Annual Circus and Spaghetti Dinner.
- A group of students won first place for the Junior Group Performance Category at the Florida History Fair and they will represent the school and the State of Florida at the National Competition next month; the students were honored at the City Council meeting and recognized in the El Nuevo.
- Parents sponsored Teacher of the Week activities; students participated in Teacher for a Day; teachers attended an I-Pad workshop.
- The school held a Lego “Battle of the Bricks” competition that was a big success.
- SAT exams went very well; the middle school students held CSI Day and staged a murder scene and investigation with a mock trial.
- First Communion and Confirmation is being held this evening; Spirit Week is next week; future activities include field trips and Museum Night with a fundraising dinner.

#### **4) PTA/PTSA Reports**

There were no reports from PTA/PTSA representatives.

#### **5) Special Presentation by the Miami Dade County Public Schools Ms. Iraida Méndez-Cartaya, Assistant Superintendent**

Chair Gordon welcomed Assistant Superintendent Iraida Méndez-Cartaya and Director Lubby Navarro, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement for Miami-Dade County Public Schools who will speak on behalf of the District. He explained that their presentation will be followed by a presentation from Springview Elementary Principal Mayte Dovale.

Assistant Superintendent Iraida Méndez-Cartaya explained that in 2008, when the School Board appointed Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, the District was facing a financial crisis with only \$4MM in reserves and a declining economy in the state and the nation. The District had nine schools that were potentially being closed by the State of Florida and the Superintendent set forth four guiding principles.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya explained that the four principles were: 1) Protect the classrooms and educational programs, 2) Protect the highly qualified workforce, 3) Protect the financial stability and future of the School District, and 4) Protect the taxpayers’ interest in its Public Schools.

Based on the four guiding principles, the development of the District's strategic plan was ensued through collaboration with the School Board and the stakeholders who are the parents and business leaders, according to Ms. Méndez-Cartaya. She explained that the strategic plan was simplified and student achievement is the one goal. There are four pillars to support student achievement that are aligned with the four principles that guide the District's work.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya explained that the pillars are ensuring a quality education and school personnel, quality schools and District leadership, financial efficiency and stability and a strong working relationship with the students, parents and the community.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya added that Superintendent Carvalho implemented a Theory of Action plan which is a continuous improvement model to analyze the current situation and anticipate what the future will bring. Once the plan is implemented, the outcome is assessed and based on the outcome the plan might have to be modified and accelerated in order to move forward. This occurs on an annual basis and sometimes more than once a year.

As a result of the work, the graduation rates have soared and last year the rate was nearly 78%, which is the highest rate that the District has ever had, according to Ms. Méndez-Cartaya. The State average for graduation is 80%. She explained that more than half of the high schools earned an "A" grade last year, while none had a grade of "F", and over 80% were "A", "B" or "C" schools.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya stated that for the 2012 administration of the FCAT there are higher standards, the test is more difficult and there is a different accountability system. Despite what might be seen as better performance by the students, the grades might not reflect this. She explained that the FCAT writing test was different this year and there was very little time for teachers to adjust so the result was a significant drop in the number of students that are proficient in writing. She explained that the State Board of Education held an emergency meeting to modify the increase to 4% as the definition of proficiency.

In comparison with other school districts on a national level, specifically the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), the District students are outperforming their peers across the nation in reading, according to Ms. Méndez-Cartaya. Students lead the nation in AP exam scores in the College Board Advancement Placements among Hispanic students; they rank first in the nation in the number of individual Hispanic students scoring at 3 or above and for the number of AP exams taken by Hispanic students. The District also ranks number seven in the nation with the African American population scoring 3 and above.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya reported that the District is one of the three 2012 finalists for the Broad Prize for Urban Education that is based on student achievement and having been recognized for the fifth time it shows a sustainable achievement. The success is due to the demand driven reform and focus on client's needs and therefore they have expanded the choice programs in the District.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya said that as a result of the demand driven reform the District has 360 magnet programs in over 103 schools and they received more than 50,000 applications last year for some type of magnet program. At the end of last year there were 158,000 students in some type of choice program, representing 46% of the student body.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya informed the Board that the District will continue to improve with the help from partners like the City of Miami Springs, parents and community leaders. The School Board will be approving a proposed plan for summer school called “The Waves of Summer”, utilizing current technology to provide year-round educational and learning opportunities for students.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya explained that the three waves are remediation, continuation and external opportunities for communities to assist in year-round learning and media centers will be open. The Links for Learning through the student portal includes materials for students to remediate, continue their progression and the District is asking community partners to open their libraries so that students can use the computers to log-in to their student portal.

To answer Chair Gordon’s question, Ms. Méndez-Cartaya clarified that the students would not have access to virtual schools since that is a separate program through Florida Virtual Schools. The student portal includes a myriad of learning tools for the students to utilize at their own pace.

Chair Gordon asked if the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) or the “No Child Left Behind” is designed to increase the competitiveness every single year.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya responded that AYP is part of the accountability system and the State of Florida does not recognize “No Child Left Behind” because it is now the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). States are allowed to request a waiver from ESEA and Florida is one of a few states that requested the waiver. Over the last three months, there was discussion about whether or not to include Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students and English limited proficient students in the accountability system.

To answer Board member Zapata’s question, Ms. Méndez-Cartaya explained that the technology portion of the summer school plan will be available to all students through their student portal. The students that are required to take summer school are high school students who failed and third graders that were retained, which is a small remediation group.

Springview Principal Mayte Dovale stated that the proposed changes are continual and due to the SBE emergency meeting today they have lowered the accountability from a 4 to a 3 or higher.

Ms. Dovale stated that the presentation was created in order to inform parents and EESAC members of the proposed changes from the State of Florida and how they would affect the students.

Ms. Dovale reported that the inclusion of Civics and U. S. History in middle and senior high schools in 2013 and beyond will require using both subjects in the grade calculation. The grade itself will total 100 points. Civics will be offered to all 7<sup>th</sup> graders and U. S. History to all 11<sup>th</sup> graders.

The English Language Learners (ELL) and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) is the other portion and it will factor into the grading system by requiring those students to perform on the FCAT and to be included in the computation of the proficiency points, according to Ms. Dovale.

Ms. Dovale explained the process of replacing the National Governor's Association (NGA) graduation rate with the Federal Graduation Rate. The NGA includes all standard and special diploma recipients and the federal only includes standard diplomas. Students that receive a special diploma or withdraw and enroll in adult education will be considered a drop out, which negatively impacts the school.

Middle school acceleration in the component will require the use of algebra end of course results and they will be required to take the end of course test, giving them an additional 100 points that they will have to gain within the scoring of their grade, according to Ms. Dovale.

Ms. Dovale stated that students have to meet proficiency in reading, and it was determined that schools getting 25% or less in reading proficiency will automatically drop one letter grade, regardless of the number of points. Elementary schools will continue with a requirement of 800 points, middle schools will increase to 900 points, while the senior high schools require 1,500 points. She explained when the State reaches 75% of A's and B's in the current year, then it is time to increase the bar. The bottom line is that the change in the accountability system may result in a decline in school performances and their grades even if student scores increase.

Chair Gordon commented that a particular school may drop a letter grade, but the students may have performed better than in the past and this is an important point to understand.

Board member Zapata inquired about the attendance at the parent Town Hall meetings. She asked if middle school parents would understand the new requirement for Civics and that the additional 100 points in terms of accountability will be difficult. She emphasized that parents must be informed that just because letter grade drops it drops does not mean that the quality of education is less.

Ms. Dovale responded that the School Superintendent asked the schools to reach out through EESAC and the P.T.A. to inform the parents that were not able to attend the Town Hall meeting. She explained that the meeting was successful for Springview Elementary.

Board member Zapata asked when there would be more information about the waiver and the decision for the ELL and ESE and Ms. Méndez-Cartaya responded that the Florida Department of Education must submit the information in June.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya continued to explain the history of the proposed changes to the accountability system and the creation of a task force to make recommendations to the SBE specifically related to the treatment of Special Education and English limited proficient students. She explained that there are serious concerns in regard to recommendation # 5 that requires Superintendents to grade Exceptional Student Education (ESE) centers, both from a performance and a moral standpoint.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya emphasized that the ESE centers are not alternative centers; the children do not have another option because they are severely handicapped with serious medical issues. In addition, most recommendations from the task force fell on deaf ears. The District has been working with Congressional members and the members of the Miami-Dade County Delegation to reach some type of resolution.

Chair Gordon asked how the Education Advisory Board and the City could work closer with the District in the future.

Director Lubby Navarro stated that the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs manages the education compacts with thirteen municipalities throughout the county and they are in the process of developing further compacts; the partnership between the municipality, the District and the business partners is the key. Moving forward, opportunities must be identified within the community in order to link the partnerships with the Education Advisory Board and provide resources for the schools during difficult economic times. The partners must come to the table and participate in the discussion moving forward.

Ms. Navarro asked the Education Advisory Board to expand the opportunities by inviting the Chamber of Commerce and the City's business partners to the discussions and presentations by the school Principals on the wonderful projects they are doing. As times become more challenging, the schools will need more resources and mentoring opportunities for the students and their career pathways.

Ms. Navarro stated that the City is business friendly and is able to identify and bring those business partners to the table. The first step is to invite them to come and once they become part of the conversation they will be at the table when there is an opportunity to create an initiative and the businesses will provide the resources.

In response to Chair Gordon's question, Ms. Navarro cited the City of North Miami as an example of one municipality who prioritized a specific project for the school year. She said that North Miami made it a priority to improve reading scores by creating a link to the City library in order to ensure that every child was issued a library card. She said that the City was very supportive of providing funds for education enhancement and the support could also come from private partners.

Chair Gordon emphasized that there must be an initial investment in the schools because quality schools leads to higher property values and more taxes. He noted that the City of North Miami held a Special meeting with City representatives and business leaders.

Ms. Navarro added that the school Principals must be engaged in the process in order to make recommendations for a project and the Board must prioritize the needs of the school and move forward with a project every school year. The District's job is to work together and move the project along so that results are seen at the end of the year, whether it is tied to science, reading or math. She reiterated that the community must be involved in order to provide opportunities for the students.

Chair Gordon explained that the enthusiasm of the I-Tech magnet had attracted elementary and middle school students who want to participate. He suggested a project to organize a programming club or a similar project along those lines at the elementary school level.

Ms. Navarro commented that High School Principal Rodriguez had already looked into linking the academy with the Middle School.

Chair Gordon offered to follow up with the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs after holding a special Education Advisory Board meeting during the summer in order to bring ideas to the table and set a goal for the next school year.

Board member Hunter understood that the federal graduation formula would replace the local graduation formula and one change is that special diplomas would not be included in the graduation rate. He asked how many special diplomas are issued in the County.

Principal Dovale stated that there were thirteen special diplomas for Miami Springs Senior High School and the formula will have a negative impact. She added that there are two situations; one is a special diploma and the other is withdrawing to enter adult education.

Ms. Méndez-Cartaya replied that she would find out the number of special diplomas that are issued in the County.

Vice Chair Salomon thanked the presenters for the excellent information and said that he wished more members of the community were present. He feels that step one for the Education Advisory Board is to identify the major deficiency issues that need to be addressed and this can be done by speaking with the Principals. He added that the community should share the burden, especially a tightly knit community like Miami Springs.

Vice Chair Salomon commented that the idea is to find an efficient way to project the issues to the community and find creative ideas in order to work toward a goal with the coordinated efforts of the Education Advisory Board, local schools, the Region District and the community.

Chair Gordon will contact the Board secretary to set a meeting date with the school Principals and community members.

To answer Chair Gordon's question, Ms. Méndez-Cartaya stated that the City can help by being a great partner and an advocate on various issues and in the past, they adopted the District's legislative platform. She said that the District needs help in raising the bar and she gave examples of what other cities have done to support academic programs, including the I-Prep academy.

Discussion ensued regarding District managed Charter schools and how they function.

## **6) Other**

Councilman Dan Espino reminded everyone of bullying prevention workshop at the Community Center at 7:00 p.m. He thanked the past and present Board members for their incredible work and for supporting the Civics Initiative. He is hearing more and more about bringing civics into the classroom; it is about teaching kids history, process and making sure that they must focus on the betterment of the entire community as they look to the betterment of themselves.

Councilman Espino asked the Board to continue their efforts with implementing the Youth Advisory Council. He noted that Arbor Day is coming up and last year the kids toured the City Hall on that day as part of the Civics Initiative. He thanked the Board again for everything they do.

Chair Gordon recommended that the Board should continue discussion on the Youth Advisory Council and this could be a topic for a special meeting. He explained that one application was received from the High School and the rules for membership must be reviewed.

Board member Zapata reported that Springview Elementary student Jack Arthur Witlock is in the process of applying for membership to the Youth Advisory Council.

Chair Gordon added that he spoke with Principal Pérez regarding the Middle School representative to the Youth Advisory Council. He said that all applications should be sent to the Clerk of the Board.

Vice Chair Salomon thanked the school Principals for all their work during the year and their commitment to students, which really makes a difference in the Miami Springs' schools.

7)     **Adjourn**

There was no further business to discuss and the meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Suzanne Hitaffer  
Clerk of the Board

Approved as written at meeting of: 09-18-2012

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